



Chief of Naval Operations

March 1, 2017

Team,

As we have been discussing, our Navy must be more competitive. Our adversaries are moving quickly and our margins of victory are shrinking. I need your help to ensure we are not giving away our competitive edge by sharing too much information publicly.

To effectively reassure our allies and partners and to deter potential adversaries, we must continue to demonstrate our strength and capability. Part of this is public communications, but we must communicate with purpose. When it comes to specific operational capabilities however, very often less is more. Now more than ever, it is important that public communication about our forces, their operations, and their abilities is conducted in a thoughtful, coordinated manner. Sharing information about future operations and capabilities, even at the unclassified level, makes it easier for potential adversaries to gain an advantage.

Scrutinize information and protect it. Avoid events that are primarily for marketing, and that don't make an intellectual contribution to warfighting. It is often at these types of events that we lose focus and "over-share." Instead, prioritize your time and energy towards events that directly improve our ability to execute our mission - to help us win more decisively at sea. Ensure you are convinced of the value of the event, and your message. Does it expand our thinking or simply promote self-talk? If you have questions on whether or not you're steering a safe course, seek out guidance or advice ahead of time and bias on the side of caution.

I am not asking you to throttle back engagement with the media or with the public. I just ask that you give thought to the events in which you choose to participate and the type of information you are sharing. Telling the Navy's story is important to maintaining public trust and confidence. As senior leaders it's part of our job to look for opportunities to talk about the fantastic work our Sailors and civilians do every day, and the role of the Navy in safeguarding our homeland, and protecting our national interests.

Make no mistake: our adversaries are looking for any possible edge. Let's not make their task any easier.

J. M. RICHARDSON